

A
L E T T E R
TO THE
INDEPENDENT ELECTORS
OF
WESTMINSTER,
IN THE INTEREST OF
LORD HOOD,
AND
SIR CECIL WRAY.

THIRD EDITION.

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TO THE
INDEPENDENT ELECTORS
OF
WESTMINSTER.

IF an explanation and detail of some of my past transactions are necessary, to you and you only are they due:—my promise—my gratitude—and the connection betwixt the legal representative and his constituents demand them.

True it is, that there are many amongst my antagonist's voters, in whose good opinion I should wish to find myself.—Many of my friends, under an undue, compulsive influence, voted against me—Those I regard.—Many others from principle voted for Mr. Fox—

Those I honour ; but, for the bulk of his poll, —(I will not particularize them)—as I received nothing but insult, I will return nothing but contempt.

My inward exultation was not small, to find that (at a time when a popular candidate is fair game—when every failing in his principles—every mistake in his actions—every foible in his private, or defect in his public life, are eagerly enquired into—with opponents deficient neither in assiduity to explore, nor abilities to avail themselves of a discovery) the clamours raised against me were founded on misrepresentation in some things—trick in others—and ridiculous absurdity in the rest :—a negative proof that my failings were not of the first magnitude.

The principal objections to me (and which my adversaries, on the commencement of the election, took care to display insultingly on their flags), were

I. That I had proposed to pull down Chelsea hospital, thereby turning adrift and starving those poor objects of national gratitude, the pensioners.

II. That I had proposed a tax on maid-servants,

vants, to the ruin of thousands, and the promotion of wickedness and debauchery.

III. That my ingratitude to Mr. Fox, who had introduced me into the city of Westminster by his sole interest, put me in the rank of the Betrayer of his Saviour ; whose name was very profusely applied to me by the GENTLEMEN of that party admitted to the inside of the hustings, as well as by the equally polite MOB on the outside.

The secretary at war having moved, That 28,551 pounds might be granted for defraying the expences of Chelsea hospital for a year (the number of pensioners 476), I observed,

“ I do not rise to give the least opposition to
 “ the sums moved for by the honourable gentleman—I wish only to apprize the house of
 “ the largeness of the demand in proportion to
 “ the number of pensioners maintained—no less
 “ than fifty-one pounds five shillings per man.
 “ If the hospital was pulled down, near four
 “ times the number might be maintained at the
 “ same expence.”

This short observation was immediately misrepresented—The officers of the hospital thought
 I had

I had accused them of misapplication of the college revenues;—the pensioners, that I had wished to turn them adrift on the world. The reports came to my ear, and on the following day, on the reports, I further explained myself.

“ In what I said yesterday concerning Chelsea hospital I have been much misunderstood. “ I never had nor hinted at any suspicion, that “ the funds of the charity were misapplied; “ nor, as a military institution, did I wish to “ see the provision for military officers annihilated. On the contrary, I do not think the “ honourable retreats for such meritorious men “ sufficiently numerous—much less did I hint “ at reducing the subsistence of the hardy veterans. The whole that I meant to apprise “ the house of was, that, taking in the expence “ of the institution—the salaries of men not “ military—and the necessary repairs of the “ buildings—by dividing the aggregate sum “ by the number of pensioners, the expence “ per man was fifty-one pounds five shillings.

“ I then thought, and I now think, that, if “ each man in that hospital was allowed twenty “ pounds per annum, and permitted to live

“ where

“ where his connections and friendships might
 “ lead him, he would live more happily ; and
 “ an overplus remain, which would provide
 “ for, at least, one thousand letter-men :—a
 “ charity more extensive and devoutly to be
 “ wished for.”

The above are the words I made use of on that occasion. I shall make no comment on them—my conscience tells me, that, far from meriting blame, I ought to have received the thanks of even those men to whom I was represented as their greatest enemy.

The second accusation, viz. the proposed tax on maid-servants, requires a little more explanation.

When the Receipt-Tax was first proposed, my constituents did, to the number of betwixt three and four thousand, in less than twenty-four hours, sign instructions to Mr. Fox and myself to oppose it. What answer Mr. Fox gave to their requisition, the committee that waited on him can best say. Mr. Bellamy, who took a leading part in the transaction, can, if he pleases, inform you what words passed between Mr. Fox and himself. The instructions

tions were brought to me, and want of zeal in obeying them has never been objected to me. The bill, however, passed into a law; but, the tax being found unproductive, Lord John Cavendish did, in the subsequent session, bring in another bill to render it more effectual.

Instructions were given to me to oppose the new bill. Part of the Committee attended me with those instructions. Mr. Bellamy told me, that "the City did not wish to be *exempted*" "from taxes, which they knew must be heavy" "—that the great objection to the Receipt-Tax was its partiality—that possibly, when" "I proposed to remove one tax, the House" "might ask for another in its stead—that he" "had one, which was a tax on maid-servants," "and which would fall more equally, though" "heavily, on the inhabitants of London and" "Westminster;" and which he begged me to propose to the House.—He then put a paper into my hand with the following words, *A tax of ten shillings on each maid-servant kept for domestic purposes.* I took the paper, and (conceiving it came from the Committee, several of them being present, and none saying any thing

thing against it) told them that I should, to the best of my power, obey their instructions; and did, on the first debate on the bill for enforcing the Receipt-Tax, after giving my reasons for opposing it, continue thus: "I will ever set myself against a doctrine much insisted on in this House, *that no person should move for the repeal of one tax without substituting another in its stead.*" This doctrine I deny. "It is not the business of the Country Gentleman to find taxes—the Chancellor of the Exchequer is paid for doing it—the representative is to take care that his constituents be not improperly burthened.

"However, Sir, I am instructed to propose a tax, which will be very heavy on my constituents, but will fall more equally. They do not object to taxes—they object to the inconveniences of the Receipt-Tax—they object to its inequality. Whether the tax they desire me to propose will not also be a grievous one, I do not pretend to say: it is their proposition, and I will read it from their paper, and in their words—*A tax of ten shillings on each maid-servant kept for domestic purposes.*"

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In this manner was I drawn in to make the proposition. Mr. Bellamy will not deny the fact. What his intentions in it were, I know not. His subsequent zeal for the party in opposition to me—his activity in the committee at the Shakespeare, from whence issued those inflammatory flags—and his silence on the subject, when my vindication ought to have been *his own act and deed*, will not leave the most favourable opinion of his candour on the occasion.

As to the tax itself, as it was not of my own invention, I will say nothing of it but this—If executed, it would not be a tax on the servant: like most other taxes, it must fall on the abilities of the person paying it. Will any one say that the wages of men-servants have decreased since the tax on them?

It will surely be allowed to be a little unfortunate, that a just obedience to the requisition of my constituents should, with them, be made an objection to my hopes of their favour.

I come now to the last and greatest objection made to me—my desertion from Mr. Fox. The English language has been ransacked for names and epithets to load me with. Detest-
able

able treachery—complicated duplicity—infamous ingratitude to the man who brought me into public estimation—are, perhaps, the least abusive in the catalogue. In answer to this objection, I will use few arguments—I will state facts, and leave them to your determination; first premising, in regard to the subsequent letters, that, though they came to me originally as private ones, I yet, before the election, shewed them to Mr. Fox, asking him whether he had any objection to their being made public; and saying, that, if he had, they should never be seen by any one. He read them, and assured me he had no objection. As therefore, they are necessary to my vindication, I can use them without any breach of private confidence.

Being in quarters with my company at Scarborough, in Yorkshire, on the 4th of June 1782, I received, by express, the following letter.

“ Dear Sir,

“ At a meeting of the independent electors
“ of this city last night at the Shakespeare, it

“ was determined unanimously to put you in
 “ nomination, as a proper person to represent
 “ this City; and I, as their Chairman, was or-
 “ dered to communicate to you their resolution.
 “ Nothing could exceed the general applause
 “ and approbation which were given to this
 “ nomination, and I have no doubt but you
 “ will be chosen without difficulty, and even
 “ without opposition. I ought, perhaps, to
 “ make you some apology for having given
 “ into this measure without having previously
 “ consulted your wishes; but the truth is, that
 “ the time admitted of no delay, and I thought
 “ it just possible that you would not refuse that
 “ to the general wishes of the City, which you
 “ might have declined, if privately consulted.
 “ I lose no time in acquainting you with what
 “ has happened; and, give me leave to add,
 “ that, as there is no man whom I should be
 “ happier to have as my colleague, so that it
 “ will be a great mortification to me, if you
 “ should hesitate about complying with what, I
 “ can venture to assert, is the genuine and ar-
 “ dent wish of the principal people here in the
 “ independent interest.— There is a doubt
 “ about

“ about the necessity of Lord Rodney’s accept-
 “ ing the peerage, which makes it uncertain
 “ when the writ can be moved for a new elec-
 “ tion. You may depend upon my endeavours
 “ to get it done as soon as possible; but, in the
 “ mean time, it would be a great satisfaction to
 “ me to hear that you are willing to become a
 “ candidate. At all events, I trust your good-
 “ ness will excuse the liberty we have taken,
 “ and impute it to the honest desire we have of
 “ having a representative whose tried principles
 “ and abilities render him so peculiarly fit for
 “ such a trust.

“ I am, with great truth and regard,

“ Dear Sir, yours ever,

“ *St. James’s, 2 June,* C. J. FOX.”
 1782.

To this I immediately sent an answer; but,
 not having retained a copy, cannot give it at
 length. The purport of it was, to express my
 sense of the honour intended me by the inde-
 pendent Electors of Westminster; but to ob-
 serve, that I had no desire to enter again on
 public service—that my fortune, though equal
 to

to m

y wants, was not of magnitude sufficient to enable me to undertake a canvass of such importance as that of Westminster—that I therefore begged Mr. Fox to return my most grateful acknowledgements to the Electors, and at the same time permit me to decline the honour intended me. I concluded by the warmest expressions of gratitude to Mr. Fox, for the friendly part he had taken.

That it was my sincere wish to decline the offer, I believe every gentleman then at Scarborough, to whom I communicated the affair, can bear testimony. The election was likely to be over in a few days ; and I had not time to play the farce of coyness, had I wished to do it : the delay of an hour would have been dangerous. However, on the eighth of June I received the following letter.

“ Dear Sir,

“ I have received your answer by express,
 “ and am very much concerned that I should
 “ have omitted stating to you, in my letter,
 “ that it was the intention that no expence
 “ should fall upon the candidate. I omitted
 “ it,

" it, thinking that the declarations of those
 " who support our cause here were so well
 " known as to make any mention of it un-
 " necessary ; and as I understand your principal
 " objection to be upon that ground, and as
 " that objection is removed, I will not consider
 " your letter as a refusal. The Committee for
 " managing the election take all the expence
 " upon themselves, and a subscription will be
 " immediately made for that purpose ; so that
 " all that is proposed to you is to be chosen,
 " and to act in this Parliament in the same
 " manner as you did in former ones ; that is,
 " upon your own ideas and principles. The
 " election is fixed, I believe, for Tuesday next ;
 " and there is a talk of starting an opposition,
 " and setting up Lord Hood. Under these
 " circumstances, it would be so inconvenient
 " to us to change our candidate, and for all
 " reasons so disadvantageous, as we know of
 " none so much to our mind, that you must
 " excuse me if I still take the liberty of conti-
 " nuing the canvass for you, and if I beg you,
 " both as a personal favour to myself, and as a
 " matter of great consequence to the common
 " cause,

“ cause, to let us avail ourselves of your ser-
 “ vices upon this occasion. If you could set
 “ out for this place as soon as possible after the
 “ receipt of this, you will be here time enough
 “ for the election; and though I allow that a
 “ contest here is a very troublesome business,
 “ yet I cannot think the trouble attending it
 “ (especially as it is unattended with expence)
 “ more than you and all of us owe to the pub-
 “ lic, at a time when so much of its welfare is
 “ at stake.—I write upon a supposition that
 “ there will be a contest, because I would pre-
 “ pare you for the worst; but my opinion
 “ clearly is that there will be none.

“ I am, with great truth, dear Sir,

“ Yours ever,

“ *St. James's, 6 June,* C. J. F O X.”
 1782.

My resolution was completely staggered by
 this letter—it came from one, for whose political
 principles I entertained (as all my friends can
 testify) the most enthusiastic reverence—it held
 out to me the flattering wishes of that character
 —it held out that all the sacrifice asked of me

was

was my domestic station and tranquillity, and that my independence both of fortune and principle was inviolate. My pride was flattered by it, and my ambition to represent so considerable a part of my fellow-subjects, and to represent them, according to my ideas, truly, prevailed over my indolence. I put myself into a post-chaise, and in three days, as if by enchantment, found myself invested with the highest honour, in my opinion, in the power of man to give, or me to aspire to.

The professions I made at my election may be comprised in a few words—That, as your representative, I should attend to your instructions; and, when not instructed, should I act contrary to your opinions, on the first intimation, I should with pleasure resign into your hands that power, which I should so unwittingly have misapplied.

From this period, till the coalition took place, there was very little opportunity for acting in parliament. It has often been asked me, “Why did you not express to Mr. Fox your disapprobation of that measure in a private, and not in a public manner?” My answer is,

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That

That Mr. Fox has a letter written by me, on the ever-to-be-lamented death of the Marquis of Rockingham, in which I expressed my hopes that he (Mr. Fox) would fill the vacancy it made; but adding that, whoever did it, I had no objection, provided that Lord North (to whom I shall ever ascribe the ruin of this empire) was kept out.—At the time the coalition was forming, so little was I in any secret, that I would give no credit to the reports concerning it; and, when it did take place, was thunderstruck. I took the first opportunity to give my sentiments against it, and, at the same time, to declare my readiness to resign into the hands of my constituents that situation, in which I feared I might be expected to act against my conscience.

A few days after this debate, a large and respectable meeting of the electors was held at the Shakespeare. A debate took place touching Mr. Fox's political conduct—it ended in an approbation of it, by a considerable majority, on the shew of hands.

A similar motion was made in respect to my conduct. The impropriety of the same meeting's thanking their representatives for actions diametrically

diametrically opposite, struck my mind so forcibly, that I arose to prevent it. Addressing myself to the meeting, I observed, that my professions at the election had been, that, on any mark of their disapprobation of my conduct, I would resign my seat to them. Such a mark now appeared ; for, if Mr. Fox was praise-worthy for making the coalition, I must be the contrary for opposing it. I should, therefore, leave it to them, whether I should ask for the Chiltern hundreds immediately, or wait till the end of the session, as I had much of the business of the city at that time before me.

Many of you, gentlemen, remember the universal clamour, in that meeting, against my resolution. Mess. Fox and Byng were the first to declare against it, and, by sophistical explanations, induced me to forego it. The unanimous thanks of the company were given me—with what consistency, must be left to the friends of the coalition in that meeting to determine.

From that period I continued to act with perfect independence : without communication with ministers in or out, my suffrage went as

the measure appeared right or wrong, and was regarded as equally insignificant by both parties.

The violence of some men seeming to me to intend ruining the constitution, I at length took a more decided part. The India Bill passed the commons—my disgust was doubled—I quitted town, resolving never more to embark in public affairs, conceiving that liberty and property were at an end. The sudden turn this affair took (though my wishes were, it had been by the interposition of the royal negative) brought on the report of a dissolution. I returned to town, and took the first opportunity to tell Mr. Fox, that I left it entirely to himself to determine, whether I should or should not offer myself for Westminster; not wishing to make use of the weapons he had helped to put into my hands against himself—That, if he thought it would do him any disservice, he had only to tell me so, and I should instantly decline.

Mr. Fox said he was much obliged to me, and wished two or three days to consider of it.

He

He was allowed them, and then told me that he had not the least objection to my standing. I said, I hoped he had considered it well, and that he must take all the consequences on himself; as in all probability I should stand in opposition to him. He said he had, and that I was perfectly welcome, — with other expressions of the like nature.

I had thus done every thing in my power, and more than my friends thought necessary, to leave myself at liberty—first by tendering my seat to my constituents—and next by leaving to Mr. Fox himself the choice of his antagonist. My principles would not suffer me to join him. The committee recommended a junction with Lord Hood; and I am perfectly happy to say that I have received from that noble Lord every assistance, which the most disinterested friend to the individual, or zealous advocate for the cause of your freedom and independence, could give. His case is somewhat singular. With an undoubted, large majority of your suffrages, his sitting is suspended. He must wait the decision of a scrutiny, which, in all probability, will
(by

(by the assistance of counsel) be protracted to months or years, and at last may be sent to a new 40 days election.

Ever ready, to the best of my judgment, to support the cause of the constitution, I should have disdained a seat in parliament, in which my duty to my constituents should have been circumscribed by private obligations. It would have been paying them a bad compliment to have supposed they were giving their suffrages to a dependent partizan.—I revered Mr. Fox's political principles ; but I would give up my consistency to no man.

Nothing remains but to express my warmest acknowledgements of your disinterested support of me at the last election.—The scrutiny (which shall never be abandoned whilst the rights and liberties of the real Electors are unvindicated) will, I trust, exhibit to the nation a glorious proof of the attachment of the first city in the empire to the constitution ; but, should chicanery or corruption prevent the accomplishment of your intentions, my satisfaction will be, that I co-operated with men, who rejected,
with

with disdain, every corrupt method of securing a majority, convinced as we all were, that it was better to fall with honour than triumph with infamy.

I am,

With the greatest respect,

Your most obliged servant,

June 19, 1784.

CECIL WRAY.



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